

in introducing this bill by my colleague, Representative JIM RAMSTAD.

The early ideas for this legislative initiative came from conversations around the dinner table with my wife, Jean. We have both lost spouses, who succumbed at an unusually early age to cancer, and we have tended to disabled and frail parents.

Many citizens have been personally touched by the experience of caring for disabled and frail parents or for spouses and children as they lived out their final days. My experience in these difficult situations has been that our health care system is a patchwork quilt of mismatched services that carry with them substantial expense. So, the challenges faced by those nearing the end of life, as well as by those caring for loved ones, are particularly meaningful to me.

Just in the last half-century, the way that most Americans come to the end of life has changed dramatically. Today, most people live for many months with a serious chronic illness before they die. In fact, statistics show that, on average, Americans will be unable to care for themselves for the last two years of their lives. However, the services that our health care system makes readily available were designed to cope with short-term threats, such as accidental injuries and heart attacks. Our nation's health care system has not been adapted to meet the needs of people facing the final phase of life or the many challenges faced by their caregivers.

Problems associated with end-of-life care are deeply rooted in federal policy. Unfortunately, we have been slow to see that these lapses are not just personal calamities and challenges, but rather, are built into federal policy. For example, while Medicare coverage makes operations and emergency services readily available to the elderly, services more appropriate for serious disability and dying are not easily found. Medicare, Medicaid, and Veteran's coverage do not provide for continuity in care, advance care planning, family support, or symptom relief for long-term fatal illnesses.

Further, end of life care uses a large portion of funding allocated to health care services. Those last few years of life are tremendously expensive, with the last year alone using 28% of the overall Medicare budget. It is estimated that half of Medicare costs—and even more of Medicaid for the elderly and Veteran's health care—go toward care of those who are very sick and will die, rather than get well. Although taxpayers spend money on end-of-life care, they do not get reliability and quality from that care.

This is a problem that will only increase in the coming years. The numbers of people facing serious illness and death will double within a quarter century, as the Baby Boomer generation reaches old age. Our nation must not only arrange and pay for services that can support the unprecedented number of people who will need care, but we must also learn how to support family caregivers. Facts show that a family member will spend nearly as many years—seventeen—caring for an elderly parent, as raising children—eighteen years. Further, a family caregiver can expect to lose more than one-half million dollars in net worth, (from having a lower pension, more time not covered by health insurance, and lost wages.)

The "Living Well with Fatal Chronic Illness Act of 2003" will meet the challenges faced by a growing number of people who must live

with serious chronic illness for some time before death. This comprehensive legislation addresses three key initiatives—one affects caregivers, two relate to improving end-of-life care.

First, the legislation proposes a \$3,000 per year refundable tax credit for the primary caregiver of a spouse or those they can claim as dependents, and certain other low income individuals, who have long-term care needs. This is important, because the United States is the only developed nation that does not support family caregivers. There is no federal government program to help improve skills, provide respite; indeed, we do not generally demonstrate that we honor caregivers' love and loyalty. The tax credit we propose is admittedly not enough to pay for the financial sacrifices of caregivers who provide long-term care, but it will demonstrate support and respect for the significant commitment and contributions made by those who help loved ones to live well despite serious illness.

We have been so focused on learning how to prevent and cure diseases that we have all but abandoned interest in what occurs as those possibilities run out. Most people now die of long-term irreversible conditions like dementia, frailty, heart failure, emphysema, cancer, and stroke; yet there is very little reliable evidence about serious illness and the end of life. This legislation will help provide guidance that the medical community needs to respond more effectively to unique end-of-life challenges.

In order to begin laying the foundation for evidence-based reforms to health care, the second section of the bill authorizes the Department of Health and Human Services to establish research, demonstration, and education programs to improve the quality of end-of-life care across multiple federal agencies.

Third, the bill authorizes the Department of Veterans Affairs to develop and implement programs to improve the delivery of appropriate health and support services for patients with fatal chronic illness. The Veterans Health Care System has been a leader in end-of-life care delivery and innovation, especially in advance care planning and pain management. This bill aims to support continued excellence through enhanced education and service delivery for this important care system that now serves so many disabled and elderly veterans.

Our nation will face major challenges in the next quarter century as baby boomers approach old age. We must ensure that people suffering from fatal chronic illnesses live out their lives in a dignified, comfortable, and meaningful way, and we must support and honor the invaluable work of caregivers.

HONORING ETHAN LINK FOR HIS OUTSTANDING INVOLVEMENT

HON. BART GORDON

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 24, 2003

Mr. GORDON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Ethan Link of Gallatin, TN, for being selected as Gallatin High School's first YMCA Youth Governor.

Ethan has been involved in the YMCA Youth Legislature since the sixth grade. In 2001, at his freshman conference, he received the Outstanding Bill award for legislation con-

cerning DNA testing for death-row inmates awaiting execution. During his junior year, he received the Outstanding Bill award for a measure to create a death penalty review commission and served as the Senate Floor Leader. This year, he was selected to attend the Conference on National Affairs and to serve as the Youth Governor for 2004.

Ethan marked the highlight of the conference as meeting with members of the White House staff, representatives and senators from several states—including myself—members of the Washington media, Judy Schneider of Congressional Research Service and many other "inspiring speakers."

Another aspect of Ethan's involvement in public service programs is his participation in the Model United Nations Program. He has been involved with this program for 4 years. At the 2002 MUN conference, he served as Jamaica's ambassador on the Security Council. The following year, he served as China's ambassador, giving him a more powerful role. Ethan will serve as Security Council president in 2004.

I commend Ethan for his many accomplishments and awards, and wish him the best of luck in future endeavors.

29TH ANNIVERSARY OF TURKISH INVASION OF CYPRUS

HON. JOSEPH CROWLEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 24, 2003

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my encouragement on behalf and to the international community for their continued efforts at resolving the Cyprus crisis. Twenty-nine years ago, without justification, and against international law, Turkish armed forces invaded the nation of Cyprus and today because of a lack of willingness from the Turkish Cypriot leadership; the international community's goal of attained peace is yet to be achieved.

I want to commend United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan for his committed efforts to resolving this issue. From the international community's perspective, on several occasions there has been an initiative to resolve this issue, and yet because of the unwillingness of the Turkish Cypriot leadership and specifically Mr. Rauf Denktash, negotiations have collapsed. The most recent negotiations held this past March shows a prime example of unwillingness on the Turkish side. During the negotiations, Republic of Cyprus President Tassos Papadopoulos, accepted the Annan Plan aimed at reunifying Cyprus. However, Mr. Denktash bluntly rejected the plan, therefore denying his own Turkish Cypriot citizens the right to vote on the issue. In early April, after the meeting, Secretary General Annan issued a report to the Security Council, firmly declaring that Mr. Denktash bears the sole responsibility that lead to the failure of the UN effort.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, there are several strong warnings in the form of protests for the UN peace process, that the Turkish Cypriot community does not support Mr. Denktash's obstructionist approach to governing their community.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly urge Congress to support the continued efforts of the United Nations led by Secretary General Annan, to bring